

Measure Would Allow Taxpayers to Claim an Itemized Charitable Deduction on Their 2009 Tax Return Instead of Having to Wait Until Next Year

Washington, DC - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today helped the House pass a bill to help earthquake victims in Haiti by offering an immediate tax benefit to Americans who make charitable contributions to aid relief efforts. The bipartisan legislation would allow individuals to claim any donations to the relief effort as an itemized deduction on their 2009 tax return, instead of waiting to claim it on their 2010 return.

"My thoughts and prayers remain with everyone who has been impacted by the tragic earthquake in Haiti," Hinchey said. "In the midst of this great tragedy, the American people have once again shown their compassion and generosity as they look for any way to help the people of Haiti recover. Millions of Americans have opened their hearts and their wallets to support relief efforts. The legislation we passed in the House today will make it a little easier financially for Americans to donate to relief efforts by allowing them to deduct their contributions for Haiti on their 2009 tax returns rather than having to wait another year."

The bill Hinchey helped pass in the House today will promote timely charitable giving to Haiti by enabling Americans to receive their tax deduction now rather than having to wait another year. The bill would also make clear that the many taxpayers making a charitable contribution to victims of the Haiti earthquake through a text message will be able to rely on their cell phone bill when claiming a charitable donation. In January 2005, Congress enacted similar tax provisions for individuals who made charitable contributions to victims of the Indian Ocean tsunami that occurred in late December 2004.

Hinchey said his office is ready to help any local residents impacted by last week's devastating earthquake. The congressman noted that his office remains ready to serve as a liaison between families and the State Department. Among other things, he said that he could help locate information on loved ones who were visiting Haiti and are either missing or trying to return to the United States.

"It is heartbreaking to watch the people of Haiti suffer in the aftermath of the earthquake," Hinchey said. "My office is ready and prepared to help anyone living in the area whose been impacted by this disaster."

In addition to passing the tax deduction measure, the House is scheduled to approve a resolution this week formally expressing condolences to, and solidarity with, the people of Haiti in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake of January 12, 2010.

Additional information on emergency support and relief efforts in Haiti can be found on the State Department's website at: <http://www.state.gov/p/wha/ci/ha/earthquake/index.htm>